

CLICK HERE for Multiple Property Listing, "Black  
Metropolis Thematic Resources"

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PROPERTY NAME CHICAGO BEE BUILDING

LOCATION 3647-55 S. State Street CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP 60653

OWNER'S NAME Ida Overton

LOCATION P.O. Box 87639 CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

STATE Illinois ZIP 60680

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds

118 N. Clark Street

Chicago, Illinois

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOTS 21, 22, 23, (EX. STREET AND EX. E. 25 FT. SD. LOTS)

BLK. 3 IN E. SMITH'S SUB. OF S 10 ACRES OF N½ SW½

SEC. 34-39-14

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE Less than one acre

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1929-31 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER Z. Erol Smith, architect

DESCRIPTION Three-story concrete framed building fronted with glazed terra cotta in

four colors. Interior arranged for stores on the ground floor and

a combination of offices and apartments on the upper stories.

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS South storefronts and entry boarded ca. 1970

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH  
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet CHICAGO BEE BUILDING

Item number 7 &amp; 8

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CHICAGO BEE BUILDING  
3647-55 South State Street

Erected: 1929-31

Architect: Z. Erol Smith

The last major structure to be erected in the State Street commercial district was the combination newspaper office and apartment building commissioned in 1929 by Anthony Overton for his newspaper the *Chicago Bee*. Overton, whose business career was started with the Overton Hygienic cosmetics manufacturing firm, later branched out into varied fields including banking, insurance, and publishing. His first publishing venture was started in 1916 with the publication of *The Half Century Magazine*, which featured a variety of short stories, informational articles, and nationwide news reports, as well as providing a prominent advertising forum for the diverse products manufactured by the Overton Hygienic Manufacturing Company. Late in 1925, *The Half Century Magazine* was phased out in favor of a new publication, the *Chicago Bee*, a newspaper which was intended to compete with Robert S. Abbott's nationally distributed weekly, the *Chicago Defender*. From its inception, the *Chicago Bee* was published from offices in the Overton Hygienic Building, with its printing plant being located in a storefront one block south on State Street. Despite the increasing shift of the black business district to 47th Street, Overton affirmed his confidence in the viability of State Street by announcing the erection of a new three-story building to consolidate the facilities of the *Chicago Bee* in 1929. Although started at the beginning of the Great Depression, construction continued throughout 1930, and was ready for full occupancy in 1931. Ironically, the failure of Overton's Douglass National Bank in 1932 so weakened the assets of the Overton Hygienic Manufacturing that it was forced to give up the Overton Hygienic Building and share quarters with the *Chicago Bee* in its new building. The Overton Hygienic Manufacturing Company and the *Chicago Bee* continued to share the building until the early 1940s when the newspaper ceased publication. The cosmetics firm continued to occupy the building, and it still maintains quarters at the State Street address.

The Chicago Bee Building is one of the most picturesque of the Black Metropolis group, being the only structure designed in the Art Deco style of the late 1920s. Designed by Z. Erol Smith, the same South Side architect who created the earlier Overton Hygienic Building, the Chicago Bee Building features a richly ornamented facade executed entirely in terra cotta, the ground floors finished in two shades of green with intricate incised ornamentation. The terra cotta was executed by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company of Chicago which employed a number of talented French modelers who had mastered the innovative Art Deco forms after having previously worked on the exhibits of the Paris 1925 Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes. The Chicago Bee Building still stands largely as originally designed with minimal alterations.

VIRGINIA, Rockbridge County, Mechanicsville vicinity, Locust Hill, VA 608 (05/12/86)

WASHINGTON, Clark County, Vancouver, Anderson—Beletski Prune Farm, 4119 NW McCann Rd. (05/15/86)

WASHINGTON, Cowlitz County, Castle Rock vicinity, Laughlin Round Barn, 8249 Barnes Dr. (05/15/86)

WASHINGTON, Lewis County, Chehalis, Palmer, O. K., House, 673 NW Pennsylvania (05/15/86)

WASHINGTON, Snohomish County, Everett, Weyerhaeuser Office Building, 1710 W. Marine View Dr. (05/14/86)

WASHINGTON, Whitman County, Oakesdale vicinity, Hanford, Edwin H., House, N of WA 271 (05/15/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Barbour County, Philippi, Philippi B & O Railroad Station, 146 N. Main St. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Beallmore (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 1500 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Brooke Cemetery (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 2200 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Duval, General I.H., Mansion (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 1222 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Elmhurst (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 1606 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Hall, Lewis, Mansion (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 1300 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Paul, Harry and Louisiana Beall, Mansion (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 1312 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Tarr, Lucy, Mansion (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 1456 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WEST VIRGINIA, Brooke County, Wellsburg, Fleming, David and Lucy Tarr, Mansion (Pleasant Avenue MRA), 2000 Pleasant Ave. (05/16/86)

WYOMING, Carbon County, Saratoga vicinity, Jack Creek Guard Station, Off FDR No. 452 (05/15/86)

The following properties were also entered in the National Register but were excluded from a previous notice:

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Chicago Bee Building (Black Metropolis TR), 3647—3655 S. State St. (04/30/86)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Eighth Regiment Armory (Black Metropolis TR), 3533 S. Giles Ave. (04/30/86)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Jordon Building (Black Metropolis TR), 3529—3549 S. State St. (04/30/86)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Overton Hygienic Building (Black Metropolis TR), 3619—3627 S. State St. (04/30/86)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Unity Hall (Black Metropolis TR), 3140 S. Indiana Ave. (04/30/86)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Victory Sculpture (Black Metropolis TR), Thirty-fifth St. at King Dr. (04/30/86)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Wabash Avenue YMCA (Black Metropolis TR), 3763 S. Wabash Ave. (04/30/86)